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CORRESPONDENCE.

MADISON, WIS., April 2d, 1903.

To the Editors of the *American Journal of Psychology* :

Gentlemen :—

I am much interested in Professor Titchener's plea for summaries and indexes in connection with psychological papers. I entirely agree with him as to the very special value of the summary, no matter whether the paper be short or long. I cannot at all agree with him, however, as to the necessity for long papers in presenting experimental results. Professor Sanford is certainly moderate in his estimate that in most cases, where one hundred pages are written, the same statement could have been condensed and better stated in twenty-five pages. Professor Titchener asks for a special index for all papers exceeding twenty-five pages in length. The essential point is, it appears to me, that papers should not exceed twenty-five pages in length. With a few obvious exceptions, it may be stated with some emphasis that a paper recounting the result of an ordinary research can, with skill in presentation, be confined to this limit. Professor Titchener tells us that long papers are inevitable, and are an evidence of an advance in psychology. Unquestionably the researches thus recorded are signs of advance, but the papers themselves are frequently an evidence of the inability of the investigator to use language or to arrange his thoughts economically. My own solution for the difficulty would be to insist that the essential parts of the paper, together with the interpretation of the points presented, be stated concisely and forcibly; furthermore, that all details by which the evidence is enforced, and the raw material out of which the conclusions have been drawn, shall again be systematically arranged in a series of appendices. The fault with long papers is largely the promiscuous mingling of all sorts of material, which may have been essential in the conducting of the research, but is not essential to the statement of its results. It is much to the credit of American psychology that it has to such a large extent avoided the undesirable habit of long papers, which have come to be characteristic of many schools of psychological writers.

Believe me, very truly yours,

JOSEPH JASTROW.

I am very glad to find my recommendations of summaries and tables of contents and indexes thus heartily endorsed by Professor Sanford and Professor Jastrow. If our three laboratories will henceforth systematically set a good example in these respects, I have no doubt that others will follow it.

I am glad, also, that the question of length of papers has been brought into open discussion. Personally, I have for some time felt that our magazine articles in general are getting to be too long. I tried to put this feeling into practice by cutting down my paper in the Wundt *Festschrift* (with 16 figures in the text) to 25 pp. Apparently the feeling is shared by other American psychologists: for I find that, in the same *Festschrift*, Angell takes only 22 pp., Cattell 6, Judd 17, Page 15, Scripture 17 and Stratton 25.

At the same time, I am sure that the question is much less simple than Professor Jastrow makes it. Neither the 25 pp. limit nor the plan of appendices will work in every case. Take Angell's paper on sound intensities, in *Phil. Stud.*, vii. It fills 55 pp.; and I fail to see either that it could have been further condensed (it is rather over-condensed already) or that anything at all would have been gained by relegation of parts of it to an appendix. Besides, all men do not write in the same way. Consider the relative length of the sentences in the work of Lipps and of Meinong. Both men have a good deal to say; each says it best in his own way; it would be absurd to run both into the same mould. And I am convinced, also, that one reason for the increasing length of papers is, really, that writers nowadays have more psychological material; the intrinsic quality of the output is, perhaps, no better than it was at first, but we have better methods, and get more facts.

We must remember, too, that perhaps in the majority of cases the longest papers are theses, first attempts at serious writing. The editor's duties in such a matter are very delicate. We have a protectorate, which must in some way be reconciled with independence of the writers. We can correct, advise, suggest, set an example; we can hardly do more without infringing on the author's rights, or at least hurting his feelings.

On the whole, therefore, I think it unwise to set a definite limit to the length of papers or to prescribe a plan for their arrangement. I want every one who has something to say to say it, and to say it as he likes best: only I ask that he give the reader such mechanical aids to the comprehension of his writing as he readily can. Further editorial legislation, such as Professor Jastrow suggests, would cripple many young investigators, who learn the better path by experience. You cannot create style by act of parliament. But, I may repeat, this editorial conservatism does not affect my belief that most of the things we read might, as a matter of fact, have been considerably shortened.

E. B. TITCHENER.